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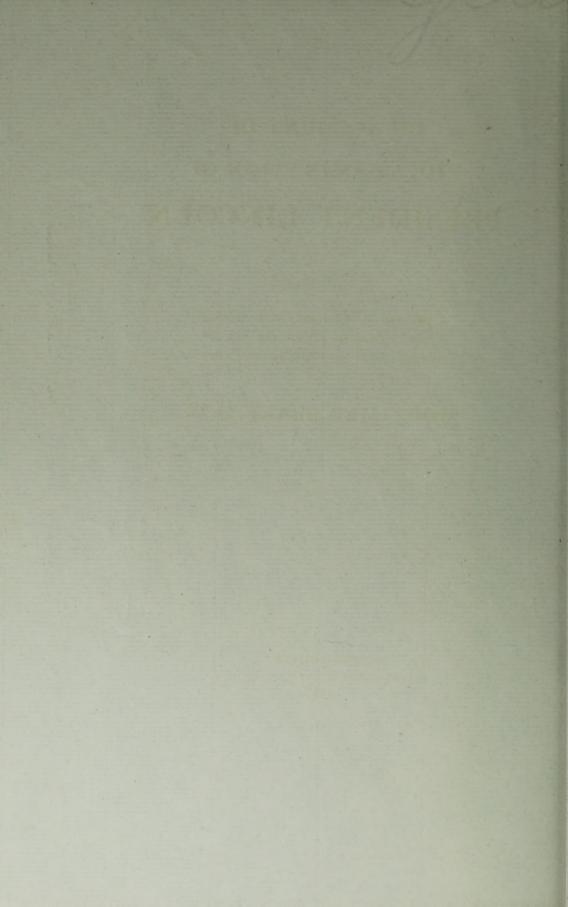
PRESIDENT LINCOLN

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MORTIMER BLAKE IND



ON ACCOUNT OF THE ASSASSINATION OF

PRESIDENT LINCOLN

A SERMON

Delivered in Winslow Congregational Church, Taunton, Massachusetts, on Sunday, April 23, 1865, by the Pastor

MORTIMER BLAKE, D. D.

CHAMPLAIN
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Foreword

ORTIMER BLAKE was born at Pittston, Maine, on June 10th, 1813, to Ira, the schoolmaster, and his wife Laura (Mowry) Blake. When the child was three years old they removed to Franklin, Massachusetts, Ira Blake's home town, where he grew to young manhood. He early developed a love for study, and entered Amherst College in 1831, at the age of eighteen. His grandfather, Philip Blake, of Franklin, being a charter member of Amherst College, was allowed to send a student at reduced rates. Graduating in 1835, the subject of his thesis was, "Are the earlier ages of a nation more interesting than the later?"

He returned to Franklin to teach, and the town built an Academy for his use. In 1837 he married his assistant, Harriet Louisa Daniels. After teaching in Franklin for two years, during which time he was studying for the ministry, and a year as Principal of Hopkins Academy, he was called to the Congregational Church at Mansfield, Massachusetts, where he remained sixteen years, greatly beloved by the people. In 1855 he was persuaded to accept the pastorate of Winslow Church in Taunton, Massachu-

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On Account of the Assassination of President Abraham Lincoln April 14, 1865

LAMENTATIONS, IV: 20 The breath of our nostrils, the annointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

HIS passage is believed to refer to King Josiah; who was killed in repelling an invasion of Judah by Egypt. It is said of him in II Chronicles (xxxv: 24-25): "All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and behold they are written in the lamentations." How worthy Josiah was of this continued national mourning may be learned from II Kings (xxiii: 25), "Like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him."

He was the one bright ornament of the throne of David, who met and grappled and overthrew the long growing idolatry of the Nation, introduced in the

coming together of the people, after we heard the startling news, was upon the Sabbath, and that God's word spoke first to the Nation in His sanctuary. The sweet and solemn influences of religion were the first. and before secular appeals and passionate harangues, to surround and collect our astounded and scattered thoughts. There was a providence in that. Again, the funeral obsequies were accompanied, through the wise suggestion of the Government, by the voice of prayer throughout the land. In every village and city the houses of worship were filled, and by many not accustomed to attend prayer meetings, where the comfort and strength and guidance of God were tearfully besought for our mourning Country. God thus hushed the Nation to a religious calm and brought Himself near to a people singularly disposed to hear what He might have to say for their profit. He has seized the avenues of our attention, and we must be still and know that He is God. We instinctively feel in these circumstances, that He has something to say to us of the greatest importance, which should not otherwise gain our attention, and that our first duty is to hear His teachings. And what are the lessons so startlingly presented before us?

The first surface truth is the fiendish spirit of Slavery, and the necessity of its destruction to our peace.

There is one unanimous conviction of this fact. It was the first thought which struggled up through our confusion, when the cry went amongst us, "The President has been shot by assassins!" Before we heard the particulars or knew of the suspected murderer, we felt

instinctively that Slavery bred the parricidal monster, and instigated his deed. We knew that no personal enmity to his victim could have instigated him; for our kind-hearted President had no personal enemies. Even his political opponent respected his conscientous integrity and upright intentions. He was too beloved a friend of the poor and ignorant to fall through their brutality. No, nothing but the spirit of Slavery, against which he had directed the power of the Nation to its humiliating overthrow, could have begotten the idea of striking at his life. So we instantly felt, and subsequently revealed facts agree to the truthfulness of this conviction. It was not a sudden, demented passion of one monomaniac, but it was the end of a long-concocted scheme, in which were we know not how many parties and abettors. It had been planned to be executed some time ago, but was providentially foiled until that fatal night. It included the destruction of all the executive officers of our Government and the Lieutenant-General of our armies. It was a rash, fore-determined conspiracy to demolish all the acting forces of our government, and in the dire confusion, to give the Rebels that advantage of recovering their feet and planting them upon our necks. How far back the plot may be traced and where it got origin and encouragement we do not yet know. But its source lies towards the south, and you cannot trace it elsewhere, nor further than to the Confederate head of treason, unless to his immediate adviser, the Father of Lies, next beyond him. It agrees with all the aims and deeds of the rebellion which has struck at the

tion; and every institution of theirs tinctured or tinged by the taint of slavery must be purified; or, if that cannot be, torn down and demolished like a leprous house in Israel. So only can we hope that the domineering, murderous spirit, which has made the South hideous and the North a Bechim, will be banished, and honest men can do their duty in safety.

A second lesson written with this precious blood is that the lingering and slighted demands of justice must be enforced.

I mean not simply the punishment of the actual agents in this infernal plot of treason. There is not a loyal person in the land who would not justify and applaud the infliction of the severest penalty known, upon the conspirators; even our Government might see the propriety of endorsing their death-warrant. But their punishment is not all the demand of justice, and the death of the whole band of assassins will not satisfy her sense of right. She is not vindictive; she does not rest in gratification of personal revenge. She looks upon right, and demands the vindication of the broad principles of public justice, and the punishment of wrong, however committed.

It is well for justice, I think, that the assassins are not yet caught. It would, indeed, have relieved the general indignation to hear that the two murderers were arrested and executed, but there would be danger that the sense of wrong would have then subsided, in a partial vindication of the death of the President. But now they are at large, hidden amongst their comrades

and sympathizers; and the popular feeling deepens into a demand that the whole body of traitors shall be doomed for the crime which they endorse by this endorsing concealment of their guilty agents. We feel that the distinction between those who struck the blow of death and those who offered the reward for the life of the President, and those who now applaud or conceal the criminals, is only a distinction of development, and not at all of spirit. The murder is in the hearts of all, and justice demands a penalty upon all.

The intervention of the God of Justice is almost visible in the timing of this terrible tragedy, and deeply enforces this demand of justice. In our joy over the near end of this wearving and insolent rebellion, we were fast feeling glad that it were done, on almost any conditions, and were disposed to be lenient, to let the leaders go free if they would only cease their assaults, and disappear. Our tender-hearted and sympathetic President was leaning to a readiness to yield everything except emancipation if the bloodshed and desolation of the Country could be stayed. The Virginia Assembly, the deepest dved company of traitors in the land, were about to meet, under safe conduct, too, to wriggle itself back into power in the Nation, and things looked to thoughtful spectators as if justice and law and national dignity were to be put back in neglect, for the sake of surface quiet and peace. We were, through a mistaken charity, on the brink of political ruin. The Nation needed a sudden shock, such as it had at Sumter and Bull Run, to stop its forgetful, fraternizing arms from embracing make for their tyranny and murders. Then, when the Nation has thus appeased the justice of God and dignity of law, we shall have rest, and even the calm and holy quiet which God gives to the people that regard His rights. But if we slight this solemn demand, and go to compromising a half-way settlement, short of the utter abolition of slavery and the punishment of the rebel leaders and commanders, we may save our draperies of mourning for some other and greater sorrow, for God will not be mocked!

I can mention but one other lesson of this national affliction: Its revelation of the essential vitality of our governmental system.

Such an event as the sudden death, by murder or accident, of any European ruler would introduce confusion and perhaps revolution and anarchy. But here the chief head of the Nation no sooner breathes his last, than another quietly and solemnly takes his place, and public affairs have no interruption. The national executive lives; the Government is immortal. There is no shock to its movements. The loyal people rouse themselves to the change of incumbents only to rally about the successor. It is a magnificent illustration of the essential vitality of our form of government, and must awaken deep thinking amongst monarchies. We have reason to thank God, while we recognize His wonderful councils, in providing for us such a successor to our departed President; whose experiences of slavery and of secession have been so thorough, and whose loyalty has been so tested and proven. That one blot upon his name shall not check our support of him, until it reappears in a confirmed strain, which we do not and can not anticipate; all his history being against it. All his utterances elevate him in our opinion as the man to settle this rebellion and slavery upon the basis of an impartial justice.

But while we give him the cordial support due to our ruler, we must not forget again that there is a Ruler above him, whose laws are supreme, and His power omnipotent. He is the friend of the oppressed and the enemy of the wicked. He will not suffer us to be destroyed, nor will He suffer us to forget Him or His law, and the nearer we live to Him and our Nation lives to Him, the safer and the happier we shall be.

